Creating Accessible PDFs for the EPA

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Please follow the guidelines below when creating PDF files for EPA. [**Note:** Depending on the version of software you are using, the commands to accomplish these requirements may vary.]

Mandatory Practices

Convert to PDF from Electronic Files

Convert to PDF directly from your electronic document (For Microsoft Office applications, choose Adobe PDF -> Convert to Adobe PDF). This creates a more accessible document and smaller file size than scanning. Scanned signature pages are generally required for electronic versions of documents.   Only scan the signature page and insert it into the PDF. [**Note:** When creating PDFs from Microsoft Office applications, be sure to add tags so screen readers will be able to recognize the content (Adobe PDF -> Change Conversion Settings -> add a check next to "Enable accessibility and reflow with tagged Adobe PDF")]

Use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for Scanned Documents

If electronic PDF conversion is not possible, scanned documents are acceptable. Scanned documents are images instead of text, so anyone using assistive technologies will not be able to "see" the document unless you process them using an Optical Character Recognition program. Using OCR also ensures pages are appropriately aligned for easy viewing. OCR also enables text searching of the document. In Adobe Acrobat, select Document -> OCR Text Recognition -> Recognize Text Using OCR.

Complete the Document Properties (File -> Document Properties)

Title: Use the actual title of the document or other descriptive title. Do not use the file name. Include a date (month/year) if possible.

Author: For this field, use the organization that created the document. Example: "USEPA, Region 10, Office of Environmental Cleanup." Do not use employee names, usernames, or abbreviated names. If prepared by a contractor, use "Prepared for EPA Region 10 by ABC123 Corp."

Subject: Subject should be a short, descriptive summary of the document. Can be the same as the Title field.

Keywords: Search engines such as Google use keywords to find your document on the Web. Keywords should be specific and descriptive. Use lower case. Separate words with commas but no spaces (e.g: pesticides,chemicals,methods,study). Phrases (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding) can be used as one keyword. Use at least two keywords and no more than ten.

Bookmark Documents Over 50 Pages

Bookmarks make it easier to find pertinent information, and can also be used to link between other PDF documents. Documents over 50 pages should be bookmarked to at least the Table of Contents level. Shorter documents do not necessarily need to be bookmarked, but it is a good general practice. [**Note:** Be sure to set the initial document view to show bookmarks (File -> Document Properties. Select the "Initial View" tab, click on "Navigation" drop down menu and select "Bookmarks Panel and Page."]

Create Links to URLs

Be sure all links to URLs are working (Advanced -> Document Processing -> Create Links from URLs).

Best Practices

Make a Reasonable Effort to Tag the Document

PDF documents should be tagged so screen readers will be able to recognize the content and read it aloud. [**Note:** If you converted your original document from a Microsoft application, the document should already be tagged and you do not need to do anything else (Adobe PDF -> Change Conversion Settings -> add a check next to "Enable accessibility and reflow with tagged Adobe PDF")]. If you are working from an existing PDF such as a scanned document, you can tag the file for accessibility using Adobe Acrobat (Advanced -> Accessibility -> Add Tags to Document), then follow these steps:

- Run a check to see what needs to be fixed (Advanced -> Accessibility -> Full Check)
- Check the reading order and correct anything that does not make sense (Advanced -> Accessibility -> Touch Up Reading Order)
- Include Alt Text for images (View -> Navigation Tabs -> Tags, select the image that needs alt text, then from the Tag window select Options -> Properties and fill in the Alternate Text)
- Run a Full Check again: Repeat step 2 and see what you still need to fix.

Bookmarking between documents

EPA's preference is to create a single PDF document instead of dividing it into multiple sections. If you divide a PDF into multiple sections, you must bookmark between them. [**Note:** When you bookmark two documents to each other, be sure to keep these documents in the same folder. This ensures the links between them will remain intact. Also, when bookmarking separate files, please indicate the title, file size, and format , e.g. Appendix A map folio, 20 MB, pdf.]

Also, identify each section on the first page. Include:

- EPA logo or "U.S. Environmental Protection Agency" spelled out (if applicable)
- Full title of document
- Title of chapter/section/appendix or description of what the smaller file contains (e.g., "Final Rule: pages 750-828")
- EPA publication number (if applicable)
- Date of document (month/year)

Reducing File Sizes

Here are some tips for creating smaller PDF files:

- Create the PDF from the electronic original, not a scanned copy.
- When saving your file, use the "Save As" option instead of "Save." (File -> Save As)
- Make changes to the original electronic document first, and then create the new PDF. Adobe Acrobat is a poor document editor.
- Use the PDF Optimizer option in Adobe Acrobat to reduce image sizes.